

EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

Message #3

Genesis 1:1-2

One of the great satanic strategies is to have secular scientists, psychologists and philosophers attempt to sway God's people into doubting the revelation of God and accepting the theories of men. Dr. Gleason Archer said: "Genesis 1 is the sublime manifesto, totally rejecting all the cosmogonies (theories of how the world was created) of pagan cultures of the ancient world as nothing but baseless superstition. The Lord God Almighty existed before all matter, and by His own word of command, He brought the entire physical universe into existence, governing all the great forces of wind, rain, sun and sea according to His sovereign will" (Archer, p. 60).

THE MAJESTIC, TRUINE GOD OF THE BIBLE CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH IN ACCORDANCE WITH HIS TIME AND HIS PLAN.

The meaning of the opening verse is very simple and clear, however the grammar and syntax of verses 1 and 2 are not so simple and clear, so we need to carefully study these verses. The problem is this – verse 2 describes the earth being in somewhat of a primitive state of chaos. The question is this – did the chaos of verse 2 occur when God originally created the heavens and the earth, before God created the heavens and the earth or after God created the heavens and the earth?

QUESTION #1 – What are the key views of interpretation of **Genesis 1:1-2**?

View #1 – The Original Chaos Creation Interpretation.

This is the view which says there is no gap of time between verses 1 and 2. **Genesis 1:1** is an independent sentence, which records the first part of the creative work of God. **Verse 2** describes the condition of the earth immediately after God created the heavens and the earth - the state of it was that it was "formless", "void" and "dark." Verse 3 then begins the account of the way that God worked to make something sensible out of something chaotic. The chaos occurred when God created the heavens and the earth.

View #2 – The Divine Judgement Gap Theory Interpretation.

This theory says that **Genesis 1:1** is an independent sentence which describes an original perfect creative work of God. Between **verses 1 and 2** there is gap of time during which Satan and his demonic army fell. Therefore **verse 2** describes something that has gone drastically wrong with creation as a result of a Divine Judgment of God. **Verse 3** becomes a Divine process of God reconstructing, restoring and reforming the earth. This view says that there is a major gap of time between the events of **verse 1** and the description given in **verse 2**. The chaos occurred after God created the heavens and the earth.

View #3 – The Relative Beginning Creation Interpretation.

This view says that **verse 1** is a dependent clause and **verse 2** is the independent clause. Those who hold to this view suggest that the text should be translated “when God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was formless and void...” In other words, this account gives testimony, not as to when the heavens and the earth were created, but as to what God did in bringing order to a heavens and earth already in existence. **Verse 1** is relative to the key statement of **verses 2-3**. The chaos of **verse 2** occurred before God created the heavens and the earth.

QUESTION #2 – Which view of interpretation is the best?

View #3 – The Relative Beginning Interpretation.

This is the easiest view to disregard. Dr. S. Lewis Johnson cites five reasons why this theory is not a viable option: (Study #1, p. 3)

1. Most serious Bible commentators reject this interpretation.
2. The context is filled with simple sentences, not compound or complex sentences.
3. The ancient versions take **verse 1** as an absolute sentence, not a dependent sentence.
4. The punctuation of the Hebrew text favors “in the beginning” not “when God began”.
The “and” of **verse 2** is a Waw disjunctive which introduces an independent clause, not a dependent clause.
5. This view assumes the existence of preexisting material, which is nowhere explained or stated.

View #2 – The Gap Theory Interpretation.

Somewhere near the year 1814, Thomas Chalmers suggested that **Genesis 1:1** referred to the initial creation of God and **Genesis 1:2** referred to the chaos which resulted from a series of judgment that occurred as a result of the fall of Satan. This was the beginning of the infamous Gap Theory. It has been stated that the real motive behind the gap theory was an attempt to come up with some form of Biblical solution for geological speculations that the earth was millions and even billions of years old. Chalmers believed his interpretation gave a good Biblical defense for such speculation. **Let us always remember that our responsibility is to defend Biblical revelation, not to try and appease human speculation.**

There are three main arguments used to support the gap theory:

(Argument #1) – The verbal “was” of **verse 2** may be translated “became” suggesting a change of status from something perfect to something judged and destroyed. Several examples are cited from Genesis where this is translated “became” (**2:7; 3:22; 19:26; 21:20**)

Refutation: The Hebrew verb “was” is an active verb- Qal Perfect. The subject of the verb is obviously “earth” = “the earth was.” The fact that the Perfect tense is used indicates the action is complete. In other words, at the time the earth is

described in **verse 2**, the earth was in a complete state, not an incomplete state. This negates the gap theory because the earth of **verse 2** is not viewed by Moses as being in some incomplete state, but it was complete in accordance with the creative plan of God at that time. Furthermore, since the noun “earth” is the subject of the verb “was” if it were to translated “became” it would require some passive verb (Niphal Stem) to make sense of the fact that something happened passively to the earth. Obviously the earth in and of itself did not become formless and void, so a Niphal Stem, not Qal would be required. Grammatically the verb should be translated “was.” In fact, it is translated “was” 98% of the time in the O.T. and this is why all major English translations – NASV, KJV, NIV translate the verb “was”.

(Argument #2) – The words “formless” and “void” are said to be unsuitable for an earth that God would classify as “good” (**Genesis 1:10**). It is further reasoned that the word “void” only occurs two times in the O.T. and in both cases it occurs with the word “formless” and it is in the context to Divine Judgment (**Jeremiah 4:23; Isaiah 34:11**). Along with this **Isaiah 45:18** is often cited to show God did not originally create the world as a waste place.

Refutation: God does not classify the earth as “good” until **Genesis 1:10**. God had various Phases to his creative work and when He gets to **verse 10** He classifies it as good. The argument of the two words is good, however it needs to be observed that the word “formless” does not always refer to Divine Judgment (**Deuteronomy 32:10**). Furthermore the word “formless” is used in Job 26:7 where it is translated “empty space” and it does refer to creation. Furthermore, Isaiah 45:18 is not an argument for the gap theory, but to give a purpose for the creative work of God - specifically create a place that would be inhabited.

(Argument #3) – The word “darkness” is said to always be a figure of sin and judgment. Therefore, those who hold to the gap theory suggest this darkness must have resulted from a judgment against sin and rebellion.

Refutation: It is true that the Bible uses darkness and light as a theological contrast many times, however darkness is not always used in a sin and judgment context. In fact, in **Psalms 104:19-24**, darkness is clearly viewed as part of the majestic creative work of God so men and animals could co-exist.

There are several good Bible students who hold to the “Gap Theory.” However there are also great Bible students who reject it and one clear Biblical reason why is **Exodus 20:11**. This key verse clearly states that God made the heavens and the earth and the seas and all other things in six days. The gap theory demands the creation of the heavens and the earth and the seas **before** the six days, which completely nullifies the point Moses is making. Dr. S. Lewis Johnson said that this verse “...makes it well-nigh impossible for the gap theory to stand” (Study 1, p. 4).

View #3 – The Original Chaos Interpretation.

This is the view that says that the chaos of **verse 2** occurred when God created the heavens and the earth. **Genesis 1:1** refers to the majestic creative work of God in which He created something out of nothing - the heavens and the earth. **Genesis 1:2** refers to the primitive state of the earth that God created on the first day that He began to create. The remainder of **chapter 1** describes God's work in creating a variety of inanimate and animate things in order to inhabit the heavens and the earth which He created. This view fits best with the grammar and a also other statements in Scripture.

QUESTION #3 – What was the earth like when God first created it?

Description #1 – The earth was formless and void . **Genesis 1:2a**
(Hebrew “tohu” & “bohu”)

This statement clearly establishes that God created something out of nothing, for the first state of the earth was some “undistinguishable mass” that had no shape or content. Why would God not create everything at once?

- 1) God takes time to develop His creation.
- 2) God does not give full blessings until His creation has developed.
- 3) God can make something with no shape or content into something beautiful .
- 4) God's work will always end up good (**Genesis 1:10, 31**).

Description #2 – The earth was in total darkness . **Genesis 1:2b**

The earth was not only created without shape and content, but also without light . Water covered the earth (II Peter 3:5), which would certainly give the world the appearance of age . It is water pressure that produces fossilization. This would account for the earth appearing older than it really is.

Description #3 – The earth was Divinely monitored . **Genesis 1:2c**

The word “moving” is beautiful in Hebrew, describing a tender love, care and protection that a Mother bird has for her baby chicks (**Deuteronomy 32:11**). In other words, all of God's creation was carefully monitored and cared for by the Spirit of God. This third member of the Trinity was carefully watching over every phase of this work of God, waiting for His chicks to hatch. Even though there was primitive chaos, God's Spirit was right there. The verb “move” indicates a gentle hovering, fluttering or vibration type of movement (BDB, p. 934) **perhaps** found today in gravitational fields or electromagnetic vibrations.

The Majestic, Triune God created the heavens and the earth and He made it a thing of beauty. This God is in the business of doing the same thing with people's lives. Reverence God, Worship God, Obey God and we too will become a beautiful demonstration of the creative power of God.